



AirPort FAQ

Q. What is AirPort?

A. AirPort is wireless local area network (LAN) technology that offers a simple, affordable way to bring the Internet to every room in your home or every desk in a classroom—without cables, additional phone lines, or complicated networking hardware. AirPort uses radio frequencies for communication. Unlike infrared signals, which require an unobstructed line of sight between the computer and the base station, radio frequencies can pass through solid objects such as walls. AirPort enables multiple computer users to surf different web sites simultaneously and access e-mail through a single Internet service account. Users of AirPort-enabled computers can also exchange files without using floppy disks or other media. AirPort runs at up to 11 megabits per second—up to 10 times faster than other home networking products. With speeds equivalent to an Ethernet network, AirPort supports simultaneous Internet browsing, file sharing, and multiplayer gaming by many computers.

Q. What are some of the ways AirPort can be used with my computer?

A. An AirPort-enabled system allows you to get on the Internet from any room in your house, even if there's no telephone line or other Internet connection in that room. If you have more than one AirPort-enabled computer in your home, they can all share the same Internet connection at the same time, so you don't have to pay for two (or more) connections. AirPort is great for sharing a single, high-speed Internet connection such as ISDN, a cable modem, or DSL. iBook, Power Mac G4, and the new iMac computers can all share an Internet connection or exchange information wirelessly using AirPort.

Schools will find wireless networking incredibly useful, too. Students who have AirPort-enabled systems can connect to the Internet even in unwired dorm rooms or classrooms. Because many schools can afford only a single Internet connection per classroom, AirPort allows that single Ethernet cable to be shared by many computers without creating a tangle of wires or requiring additional, expensive lines.

Q. What is required to set up a wireless network using AirPort?

A. Apple has made it remarkably easy for anyone to set up AirPort. You need just three things:

- An AirPort-enabled computer (iMac, iBook, or Power Mac G4)
- An AirPort Card
- An AirPort Base Station or an AirPort-enabled computer serving as an AirPort Software Base Station

You can install the AirPort Card yourself and have it operating in minutes. Following the instructions that come with the card, simply plug it into the appropriate slot in your computer and run the installation software. The Setup Assistant walks you through the process in simple terms and automatically configures your computer for you.



Q. Which Apple systems are capable of wireless communications?

A. iBook, the new iMac, and Power Mac G4 computers come with an antenna already built in, so they are AirPort ready. All you need to add is an AirPort Card. PowerBook computers can use a third-party PC Card to communicate with an AirPort network.

Q. Is the AirPort Card included with AirPort-ready computers?

A. No. The AirPort Card is an optional upgrade. It can be purchased in a separate kit or as an option when you order an iMac, iBook, or Power Mac G4 system through the online Apple Store. The AirPort antenna is already built into the computer.

Q. How much does it cost to add wireless capability to my AirPort-ready computer?

A. The AirPort Card has a suggested retail price of \$99, whether you order it as part of your initial configuration or buy it separately later. The same AirPort Card can be used with any AirPort-ready system, including the new iMac, iBook, and Power Mac G4 systems. The AirPort Base Station has a suggested retail price of \$299. Both the AirPort Card and the AirPort Base Station can be purchased from an authorized Apple reseller or through the online Apple Store.

Q. What is the AirPort Base Station?

A. This unit is similar to the base station of a cordless telephone. It connects to the phone line in your home. The AirPort Base Station enables different family members to share a single modem connection so that they can simultaneously access different Internet sites—all without wires. The base station also has an Ethernet connection in case you have a cable modem or DSL line in your home. Whenever you open your browser, the base station dials your ISP and goes to the web site you've requested. It automatically hangs up soon after you're finished.

Q. How far from the base station does AirPort work?

A. AirPort typically has a transmission radius of about 150 feet—even through walls. So you can use AirPort-enabled systems in every corner of your house or across several classrooms.

Q. How does the AirPort Base Station share a single Internet connection?

A. The AirPort Base Station can share a dial-up or Ethernet-based Internet connection (such as with a DSL line or cable modem). It shares a single IP address (provided by your Internet provider) among the computers connected to your base station using a technology called network address translation, or NAT. NAT works similarly to the way the post office delivers mail to your home address. Mail arrives at your home, and you distribute it to individual family members. The base station takes the information you request from the Internet and automatically sends it to whichever computer requested it.

Q. How do I dial and connect to the Internet using an AirPort Base Station?

A. When you launch a TCP/IP application, such as an Internet browser or e-mail program, the base station modem dials out to your Internet service provider (ISP).

Q. How does the AirPort Base Station receive my computer Internet settings?

A. When you run the Setup Assistant for the base station, it transfers the Internet setting information from your computer to the base station.



Q. Does America Online work with the AirPort Base Station?

A. No. The AirPort Base Station supports dial-up connectivity to the Internet using the industry-standard PPP connection method. America Online does not currently support this connection method; therefore, it's not compatible with the AirPort Base Station.

Q. What is the AirPort Software Base Station?

A. AirPort software allows you to use a second AirPort-enabled computer as a wireless base station to connect to the Internet instead of using an AirPort Base Station.

Q. When will the software for the AirPort Software Base Station be available?

A. The AirPort Software Base Station will be available in an upcoming software release. You'll be able to use your existing AirPort Card with the new software to allow your iBook, new iMac, or Power Mac G4 computer to be used as a base station to connect to the Internet. Visit www.apple.com/airport for the latest information on AirPort software releases.

Q. Can I transfer files between AirPort-enabled computers equipped with AirPort if there is not an AirPort Base Station?

A. Yes. You can transfer files or play multiplayer games directly between AirPort-enabled computers. Simply use the AirPort Control Strip module on both computers to switch from using the AirPort Base Station to using direct computer-to-computer communications. Depending on their surroundings, the computers will be able to communicate within about 150 feet of each other.

Q. Can I create an AirPort network in a classroom?

A. Yes. With AirPort-enabled computers and an AirPort Base Station, you can create a wireless network in your classroom. The base station simply plugs into your existing Ethernet network. You can also add more base stations to provide coverage for your entire school.

Q. Can I share a printer among computers on an AirPort network?

A. Currently Apple offers the same printer-sharing capabilities for wired and wireless connections. In the classroom, IP printers can be shared on the AirPort network just as they are on your Ethernet network. In the home, many USB printers cannot be shared among Macintosh systems. However, because AirPort allows files to be easily exchanged between computers, you can simply transfer your file to the computer that's connected to the printer.

Q. If I use my computer with AirPort at school, can I also use AirPort at home?

A. Yes. If you purchase an AirPort Base Station for your home (or set up an AirPort Software Base Station), you can use AirPort there, too. The AirPort Control Strip module allows you to quickly change between your home and school networks.

Q. What is IEEE 802.11 and why is it important?

A. IEEE 802.11 is a standard developed by the same organization that set standards for Ethernet networking, which is commonly used in offices. 802.11 is a worldwide standard, so companies that build products conforming to this standard can have their products work together. Schools often find it beneficial to use standardized equipment so that they can combine hardware from different vendors. Home users who buy a standardized product are assured that it will work with products from other companies.



Q. What's the difference between DSSS and FHSS?

A. Direct Sequence Spread Spectrum (DSSS) and Frequency Hopping Spread Spectrum (FHSS) are two different technologies in the IEEE 802.11 specification. They are incompatible with each other. Frequency Hopping technology is limited by government regulation to 2 megabits per second. Direct Sequence technology is becoming more widespread and supports data rates of up to 11 megabits per second. Apple uses DSSS technology because it is equivalent to Ethernet data rates.

Q. Can I use a PC notebook in an AirPort network?

A. Yes. Because AirPort is based on the IEEE 802.11 DSSS standard, a number of companies sell products that allow a PC to be used in an AirPort network.

Q. Will my AirPort-enabled systems and the AirPort Base Station work with third-party 802.11 wireless products?

A. Yes. AirPort-enabled computers and the AirPort Base Station are designed to interoperate with third-party products that conform to the IEEE 802.11 standard and use DSSS modulation.

Q. How do I add an older iMac or a Power Macintosh G3 system to an AirPort network?

A. You can add an older iMac or a Power Macintosh G3 to the network by using a crossover Ethernet cable with the AirPort Base Station. You merely locate the base station near the computer, connect the Ethernet port of that computer to the Ethernet port on the base station using the crossover cable, and you're ready to share the AirPort Base Station modem. You can also share files and play multiplayer games.

Q. How do I add a PowerBook G3 computer to an AirPort network?

A. Several companies offer Macintosh-compatible wireless PC Cards that can be used in an AirPort network.

Q. What kind of security does AirPort provide?

A. AirPort offers password access control and encryption. Users are required to enter a password to log on to the AirPort network—and, optionally, an additional password for access to any other computer on the network. When transmitting information, AirPort uses 40-bit encryption to scramble data.

Q. Can I turn AirPort off in my computer?

A. Yes. The AirPort Control Strip module allows you to turn off the AirPort Card. You may want to do this if you are on an airplane or don't need to use AirPort capabilities.

Q. What version of the Mac OS do I need to use AirPort?

A. You'll need Mac OS 8.6 or later.